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Thursday, 31 July 2003, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Arias	(Spain)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Bulgaria	Mr. Raytchev
	Cameroon	Mr. Chungong Ayafor
	Chile	Mr. Muñoz
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Guinea	Mr. Boubacar Diallo
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Pakistan	Mr. Khalid
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Broughton
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation concerning Western Sahara

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2003/565 and Corr.1)

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03-44800 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Western Sahara

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2003/565 and Corr.1)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara, document S/2003/565 and Corr.1. Members of the Council also have before them document S/2003/777, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America.

It is my understanding that the Security Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile, China, France, Germany, Guinea, Mexico, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1495 (2003).

I shall now call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Boubacar Diallo (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to express its satisfaction at the unanimous adoption of resolution 1495 (2003) on the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), which reaffirms, if there were need to do so, the shared concern of the Council to preserve its unity and credibility.

The compromise that we have achieved following difficult negotiations opens the way to a new and dynamic process that will allow the parties involved to engage in negotiations designed to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution to the question of the Western Sahara. It is also a sign of the continuation of constructive dialogue aimed at achieving a political solution, which clearly will assist in peace-building and in consolidating solidarity throughout the Maghreb region.

The second operative paragraph, which calls on the parties to work with the United Nations and with each other towards acceptance and implementation of the Peace plan, fits into that dynamic process.

Once again, we would like to reiterate our sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General and to his Personal Envoy, Mr. James Baker, for their tireless efforts to find a solution to this question. We encourage them to continue in their lofty task.

Mr. Duclos (France) (*spoke in French*): The Security Council traditionally decides by consensus on the issue of Western Sahara. This is a critically important and decisive element that endows the action of the United Nations with full force in helping the parties find a just and lasting solution to this dispute.

Following sometimes arduous negotiations, the French delegation welcomes the fact that consensus was maintained in the adoption of the draft resolution submitted today. That resolution makes clear the fact that the Security Council is not deviating from the approach it has been taking in dealing with the issue of Western Sahara, which seems to us the best way of making progress towards a lasting settlement.

Indeed, this resolution does not impose a solution on the parties, which would have been likely to cause the dynamic process of dialogue and efforts towards peace to break down. Rather, it prompts a resumption of discussions, backed by the confidence of the Council.

The Secretary-General had noted in June 2001 the deadlock regarding the peace plan. Other ideas had to be found that would make it possible to achieve progress towards a equitable solution to the dispute. In this context, we commend Mr. Baker's efforts to come up with imaginative options and to provide fresh

impetus to the quest for a political solution agreed on by the parties. It is this track that must be pursued.

Mr. Raytchev (Bulgaria): Bulgaria welcomes the fact that it was possible to reach a consensus on the proposed text for the resolution just adopted. We would like to express our deep conviction that, on the basis of the resolution, both parties will work towards a mutually acceptable solution.

I wish also to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General and to his Personal Envoy for their tireless efforts to find a solution to the problem.

Mr. Khalid (Pakistan): Our position on the question of Western Sahara is well known. Pakistan attaches great importance to this issue and its early resolution, involving, as it does, countries with which Pakistan enjoys traditionally close and fraternal relations.

The Western Sahara issue has long been on the agenda of the Security Council and hinges on the principle of self-determination, which is an integral part of the Charter of the United Nations. Pakistan appreciates the continued engagement of the Secretary-General and the significant role played by his Envoy, Mr. James Baker, in pursuit of a political solution to the dispute over Western Sahara which provides for the realization of the right to self-determination.

The peace plan could provide a basis to facilitate the early solution of this issue on the basis of agreement between the two parties. Pakistan supports a negotiated peaceful settlement, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. Pakistan has consistently held that all resolutions of the Security Council, whether under Chapter VI or Chapter VII, should be implemented.

Pakistan has all along supported the efforts aimed at finding a common ground, with a view to bringing the parties closer to a solution. We therefore appreciate the constructive efforts made by the members of the Council to evolve an acceptable text. We are glad that the Council has been able to move forward in a unified way.

Pakistan has joined this consensus in the hope that this resolution represents a step forward in the direction of a peaceful settlement of this longstanding dispute.

Mr. Chungong Ayafor (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the recent adoption by consensus of the resolution on Western Sahara. This resolution — the result of the efforts of all members of the Council — attests to its determination to find a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution. The flexibility and constructive spirit evinced by the parties enabled the Council to achieve such a positive outcome and to maintain its unity.

My country would like to congratulate the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for their tireless efforts and persistence in the pursuit of a solution for Western Sahara. Cameroon reiterates its faith in a negotiated solution accepted by all parties and assures the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy of its support.

My delegation urges the parties to engage in direct, frank and constructive dialogue with a view to resolving their differences. We believe that this is the only way to restore peace and cooperation in the Maghreb in particular and in Africa in general.

Mr. Negroponte (United States of America): The resolution we have adopted today responds to the Secretary-General's recommendations on the way ahead in the Western Sahara. This resolution represents a considered recommendation of the Council to the parties and neighbouring States but does not constitute an imposition. All Council members support the peace plan for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara as an optimum political solution to this long-standing dispute of nearly 30 years.

The peace plan is a fair and balanced compromise giving each party some, but not all, of what it wants. We call on the parties and the neighbouring States to seize the opportunity presented by the plan and to cooperate closely and actively with the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, and with each other, to follow up this important resolution. We especially appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Mr. James Baker, in achieving this important step forward towards resolution of the long-standing Western Sahara dispute.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation has always believed that the authority of the Security Council stems from its unity. We are therefore pleased to note that, in the spirit of compromise and cooperation, and after numerous consultations, we have finally adopted the present resolution on Western Sahara. That once again proves that, with sufficient political will, consensus is always attainable. We hope that the spirit of consensus will continue to prevail in our work.

China has always been concerned about the issue of Western Sahara. It has been our hope that this matter could be resolved in a fair and equitable way, within the framework of the United Nations.

China supports and appreciates the efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, Mr. James Baker. We also wish to thank all the parties concerned for their tireless efforts to find a solution to this problem. We hope that that the parties concerned will continue to act in the spirit of pragmatism. We also hope that this long-standing problem can be resolved as soon as possible through dialogue and consultation, for the sake of peace and development in the Maghreb region.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We have this morning adopted a resolution on the question of Western Sahara based on consensus — rather than imposition — regarding what we hope will be a real path towards a definitive resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara. We now have a clear and pragmatic resolution that leaves enough political room to reach a definitive solution on the basis of the Baker plan and the agreement of the parties. We are pleased with that important step, which does the Security Council credit.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy. We hope that the parties will now do their part. In the end, it is the parties themselves who hold in their hands a chance to reach a definitive solution that brings about peace and stability and that responds to the aspirations of the peoples.

Mr. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council has reached consensus on a resolution regarding Western Sahara, an item that has been on the Council's agenda for a very long time without agreement among the parties on a settlement. Having cast a positive vote, my delegation would like to reiterate what we believe to be the two main principles governing United Nations actions in reaching a solution to this long-standing problem.

First, there is the principle of self-determination, which must not be abandoned as an essential element in pursuit of a just resolution of this issue. The second is the fact that the parties and the international community have opted for a negotiated solution. The job of the Council, the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, Mr. James Baker, is to explore every avenue potentially conducive to a negotiated settlement.

Today's resolution constitutes progress on both those counts, in that it reaffirms the principle of self-determination and seeks a negotiated settlement. Possible elements of agreement can be discerned in that progress. The Council has expressed its view that the Baker plan has obvious merit and my delegation shares that view. The resolution very clearly and justifiably points that out. Although there is not yet complete agreement among all the parties on that proposal, we nevertheless believe that the plan should be the conceptual and substantial basis to ensure that the mediation sponsored by the Secretary-General and being carried out by Mr. Baker can now make progress towards agreement.

We are convinced that there is now a new opportunity to achieve a lasting solution to this problem.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): I have the feeling that everything has already been said, but not yet by everybody.

I would like to join other delegations in commending the work done by the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, Mr. James Baker, in preparing this resolution. We welcome the fact that the Security Council has reached consensus on the resolution. We feel that it is now a fair basis for negotiations in good faith. We call upon the parties, neighbouring States and the Secretary-General — acting through his Personal Envoy — to work together to use this opportunity to come closer to a fair and negotiated settlement of this long-standing conflict.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): Like my colleague from Germany, I too would like to join other colleagues in commending the President personally for enabling these difficult negotiations to produce something that is good for the parties and that can make it possible for us to uphold the recommendations of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy — the Baker plan — and of the Secretary-General. I think that, after so many years, we now have a good basis upon which the parties and the countries of the region can together build a sound country in Western Sahara. I would also like to say that the principle of self-determination has been kept as the basic principle for negotiation. That is very positive.

I would like to commend the parties for the political will they have demonstrated. I hope that this will be maintained down the road, as the road map that now exists constitutes a very sound basis upon which they can build together. They can count on the support

of the international community. I also wish to say that we in Angola would like to be able to build upon the relations that already exist among all the countries in the region that are party to this arrangement.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We too would like to express our satisfaction with the decision that has been taken by the Security Council. It is important that the resolution that has been adopted opens up the way for the continuation of the peace process on the basis of Mr. James Baker's peace plan. At the same time, it does not impose a final solution to the problem upon the sides. That solution will be worked out jointly in the negotiating process among the parties and the United Nations.

We also consider it very significant that the Security Council has been able to demonstrate its capacity to come to an important consensus decision on a difficult problem on its agenda.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation welcomes the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution on the Western Sahara. Any lack of agreement between Arab parties is of great concern to Syria. Syria always makes every possible effort to resolve differences between Arab parties. We hope that the consensus resolution that we have adopted will bring the parties together with a view to achieving a peaceful resolution of the question of Western Sahara.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General and express appreciation for his efforts and those of his Personal Envoy. We wish them every success in their endeavours in the near future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I will now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Spain.

The unanimous adoption of resolution 1495 (2003) clearly represents an important step towards a just, lasting and mutually acceptable settlement of this controversy. It is of particular importance for the countries in the region and for the Mahgreb in general.

Spain has always had a policy of constructive neutrality and of not imposing solutions on the parties. We have spared no effort, as an interested party to the conflict as well as in our capacity as President of the Council, to achieve the greatest possible consensus.

We believe that, under current circumstances, the Council could not have limited itself to approving a mere technical extension. The Council had before it the serious and concrete proposal of Mr. Baker, the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General — a proposal recommended by the Secretary-General — and it was duty-bound to express its views on it. Furthermore, in giving positive consideration to the proposal, the Council could not waste the opportunity that this provided the parties to make a commitment based upon mutual agreement.

Spain would like to express its satisfaction at this outcome — which coincides with our position — particularly since it deals with a dispute, and, therefore, the Security Council must deal with the issue under Chapter VI of the Charter. Given that a resolution of the dispute must be based on agreement among the parties, we are also pleased that that is indicated in both the preambular and operative parts of the resolution.

Furthermore, the resolution deals with other important objectives of the Council. It supports the Personal Envoy's peace plan, considering it the best chance for a solution, and calls upon the parties to the conflict to cooperate with the United Nations and among themselves with a view to accepting and implementing the peace plan.

I would like to conclude by thanking all members of the Security Council for their understanding, as well as for the efforts that they made in the course of drafting. We would like in particular to thank the United States delegation — Ambassador Negroponte and his team — for their ability to combine the determination to make real progress with the necessary flexibility to include contributions from Council members, including my own.

In conclusion, Spain would like to reiterate the appeal that has been addressed to the parties not to waste this opportunity and to begin, with the least delay, a dialogue leading to the full acceptance of the plan and the implementation of its provisions on the basis of mutual agreement. Spain reaffirms its support for such a dialogue. We will do our utmost to ensure that it can become a reality in the near future.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.